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## General

Panama, located in Central America, is bordered on the E by Colombia and on the W by Costa Rica. The Caribbean Sea lies to its N and the North Pacific Ocean lies S.

The climate is tropical, being hot, humid and cloudy with a prolonged rainy season from May to January and a short, dry season from January to May.

Heavily wooded hills and mountain ranges generally span the length of the country with the exception of the low gap at its narrowest part through which the Panama Canal crosses.

Elevations E of the canal rise to a height of about 1,615m near the Colombian border and to a height of 3,475m in the mountains to the W of the canal.

Most of the numerous rivers of the country flow into the Pacific Ocean and are not navigable.

## Buoyage System

The IALA Buoyage System (Region B) is in effect. See Chart No. 1 for further IALA Buoyage System information.

## Currency

The official unit of currency is the Balboa, consisting of 100 centesimos.

## Government

Panama is a centralized, constitutional republic comprised of nine provinces and one territory.

Under April 1983 reforms, it provides for a president, two vice presidents, and a 67-member legislative assembly elected by popular vote.

The capital is Panama City.

## Holidays

The following holidays are observed:

Jan. 1, New Year's Day; Jan. 9, National Mourning Day; Shrove Tuesday; Good Friday; May 1, Labor Day; Oct. 11, Anniversary of the Revolution; Nov. 3, Independence from Colombia; Nov. 5, Colon Independence Day; Nov. 10, Los Santos Day; Nov. 28, Independence from Spain; Dec. 8, Mother's Day; and Dec. 25, Christmas Day.

## Industries

The major industries include petroleum refining, sugar milling, brewing, and cement.

The most important crops are bananas and sugar cane. Also grown are rice, maize, cocoa, coffee, and coconuts. Livestock are being raised in increasing number.

Timber resources are considerable, notably mahogany.

## Languages

The official language is Spanish, although a segment of the population speaks English as a native tongue. Many Panamanians are bilingual.

## Search and Rescue

Panama Intelmar Radio maintains a continuous listening watch on international distress frequencies.

**Time Zone**

The Time Zone description is ROMEO (+5).

**U.S. Embassy**

The U.S. Embassy is situated at Avenida Balboa and Calle 38, Apartado 6959, Panama City 5.  
The mailing address is American Embassy Panama, Unit 0945; APO AA 34002.